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On Wednesday, October 17, thirty-four farm owners and operators, along with several agency representatives, traveled by bus and private vehicle for a conservation field day/farm tour to view and learn more about conservation practices on farms in Tazewell County.

The bus from Four County Transit in Cedar Bluff left from the Tazewell Mall parking lot around 9:00 a.m. The first stop on the tour was the James H. Thompson Farm in Thompson Valley. Mr. Thompson owns 18 acres of pastureland. Mr. Thompson's cattle had to travel down a steep bank to reach water in the farm's spring. Using the Best Management Practices Cost Share Program, Mr. Thompson was able to fence off the spring and install pipeline and a livestock watering trough. His installed practices improved water quality and prevented erosion damage on the stream bank. While at the Thompson Farm, Lenden Thompson, District Technician, addressed the conservation enhancements on the Thompson Farm.

The second stop on the tour was Hadley Lester Farm. Mr. Lester has 27 acres of farmland. He is a new participant in cost share programs. Mr. Lester has drilled a well, installed a pumping plant, and installed 1842 feet of pipeline and a reservoir. These installed practices provide water to 3 livestock watering troughs. Mr. Lester will install 1240 feet of woven wire fence to subdivide his grazing boundary and exclude water and woodland. Mr. Lester received cost share on these installed practices from the Environmental Quality Incentive Program (EQIP). The Lester farm has made a major improvement in water quality and reduced erosion of the farm's pastureland. While on the Lester Farm, Tom Smith, District Conservationist serving Tazewell County, addressed the merits of the cost share programs and expanded on the layout and installation of the best management conservation practices.

The last stop on the tour before lunch was the Kyle Puckett Farm. Mr. Puckett operates a 55 acre beef cattle farm. Conservation practices installed include 3,115 feet of woven wire fence, the drilling of a well and installation of a pumping plant, 2,200 feet of pipeline and a reservoir to furnish water for 3 livestock watering troughs. Mr. Puckett has installed a .6 acre riparian buffer planted with hardwood tree seedlings. The installation of these practices was made possible with the EQIP cost share programs.

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### ---TAKE TWO---

Preventing erosion on his pastureland and better distribution of his grazing herd convinced Mr. Puckett to install the conservation practices and to participate in the programs. While at the Puckett farm, David Richert, VDOF Area Forester, expanded on the planting of riparian buffers and other forestry practices.

Before continuing to the next stop, the group had lunch in one of the historic cabins at the Crab Orchard Museum. The group enjoyed a delicious lunch catered by Clint Neel, owner and operator of Your Grate Escape in Tazewell, Virginia. After lunch, participants were given promotional items with the district's current logo and contact information. Patricia Neel, Administrative Secretary/Office Manager for the Tazewell SWCD, was available to answer financial questions on the Virginia Cost Share and State Tax Credit Program. The museum staff also presented participants with a copy of the book "The Last Great Place" about Tazewell County and were given a tour of the museum.

The next stop was the Albert Cornwell Farm. Mr. and Mrs. Cornwell, on their 92 acre farm, using cost-share programs, drilled a well and installed a pumping plant to pump water using 4,040 feet of pipeline to supply water to a reservoir for 6 livestock watering troughs for better grazing distribution and reduction of erosion on the farm. Mr. Cornwell plans to install 3,400 feet of 5 strand barbed wire fence. One spring was developed and one animal trail and walkway was installed to move cattle from one pasture to another. Barry Skiles, NRCS Conservation Engineer, addressed layout, survey and design of conservation practices on the Cornwell farm.

The last stop of the day was the Donald Elswick Farm. Mr. Elswick has 60 acres of pastureland. He has developed a spring and installed a pumping plant. Water is pumped to a reservoir and from there, flows by gravity to 4 livestock watering troughs. These conservation practices also required the installation of 3,780 feet of pipeline. The farm will have a 6 acre riparian buffer planted with tree seedlings. Two (2) critical areas on the farm will be treated. 1700 feet of 5 strand barbed wire was installed to subdivide grazing and to exclude cattle from the stream and to protect the newly planted trees. The Elswick farm is an excellent example of good pasture management. While on the Elswick farm, Greg Meade,

NRCS WAE and local contractor, discussed and answered questions on practice installation.

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## --TAKE THREE--

The Tazewell SWCD would like to express their appreciation to the Tazewell County Board of Supervisors, Tazewell County Administrator Jim Spencer, Four County Transit Administrator Leon Alder, Crab Orchard Museum staff and hostess Diane Cain, Clint Neel and Your Grate Escape, NRCS District Conservationist Tom Smith (Tazewell), NRCS Conservation Engineer Barry Skiles (Christiansburg), VDOF forester David Richert, James H. Thompson, Hadley Lester, Kyle Puckett, Albert Cornwell and Donald Elswick.

Anyone interested in learning more about the availability of cost share programs may visit the USDA Service Center, located at 727R West Riverside Drive, behind Ron's Kwik Stop in the River Jack area of North Tazewell or call 988-9588 Monday through Friday.

Funding for the Water Quality Field Day/Farm Tour was provided by the Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation with support from the Environmental Protection Agency and the Virginia General Assembly.

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